

**George Washington to Henry Riddell, March 1, 1774,
Draft, The Writings of George Washington from the
Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C.
Fitzpatrick, Editor.**

***To HENRY RIDDELL**

Mount Vernon, March 1, 1774.

Sir: on Sunday afternoon, your favour of the 24th. Ult. came to my hands, as you profess to know but little of the expence attending the Importation of Palatines, and it being a business I am totally ignorant of myself, I am affraid to plunge into it without further consideration and advice and therefore, must lay aside my Scheme either altogether or in part for the present; But as I have already given you a general view of my Plan to wch. I beg leave to refer I would first ask whether, it is of Importance enough to any of your Ships coming from Rotterdam hence, to take in a freight of about 80 or an hundred of these German's provided that number of Men, or Men and their Wives with not more than one Child to a Family, could be had under the usual Indenture? If this could be done I would, at all events, make tryal of that number and kind; but do not incline to encounter the Inconvenience and expence of Families incumberd with many Children as these would only add to my expences without contributing to my design. I will either consider these People as my property during the Indented term, affording them a reasonable and necessary support and maintenance and receive the fruits of their labour during the stipulated Servitude or, if they will be jointly bound for each other and let their Indentures remain as security (wch. is all the security the nature of the case will admit of) that all the expence I am put to Importing, Planting, and supporting them on the Land, till they can raise a Crop for themselves, shall be repaid me with Interest, they may be considered as

Library of Congress

free People, and appropriate the fruits of their labour (having regard to my disbursements) in any manner they please. In the latter case, they must be considered from the first, as Tenants, upon the terms mentioned in my last. In the first case they will go to the Land under the favourable Circumstances, and assurance of becoming Tenants at the expiration of their Indented term, upon the very farms they have been making so that in Fact, they ultimately reap the benefit of their own labour, bestowed at my expence during their Servitude; thus much for the Indented People, as to those who are able and desirous of paying the expence of their own Passages, I can be under no Ingagement to them unless it be a reciprocal one; that is, I will encounter no expence or engage in no promise to them if they are left at large with me; although I could undertake upon their engaging so to become Tenants upon the Terms mention'd in my last, provide them in good Land in the Neighbourhood of the other's; so as that they might form an entire settlement of their own, there being Land enough (belonging to me) to afford comfortable farms for 300 Families.

If you think you can supply me with this number of Palatines of these kinds, and upon these terms, I should be glad to know it between this and Saturday; as I shah then undertake a journey, from which I shall not be returnd till the 20th of March; and in what every manner you think a more formal proposition or declaration of my Intention (than is containd in this, and my former Letter) should be made please to point out, and to whom it is to be addressd and I will endeavour to do it. In the meanwhile, I have to thank you Sir for your obliging offer's to serve me in this matter, and to assure you that I am, etc.¹

1iddell replied (March 18) that he “will think no further of importing Germans, the difficulty attending it being so great.” The expenses in obtaining and shipping such people appeared to have increased to such an extent that men heretofore interested in the business had withdrawn from it.